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THE ABENDBERG:

AN ALPINE RETREAT,

FOUNDED BY DR. GUGGENBÜHL FOR THE TREATMENT
OF INFANT CRETINS.

By L. G., Geneva.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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EDINBURGH: WILLIAM P. KENNEDY.

GLASGOW: D. BRYCE. LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.

MDCCCXLVIII.

EDINBURGH: T. CONSTABLE, PRINTER TO HER MAJESTY.

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“It is a good thing occasionally to find a man thus giving up his life to an object of pure, unmixed benevolence ; sacrificing everything to a wish which is the continual subject of his thoughts ; when that wish is, to raise to the condition of human beings a body of his fellow-countrymen who have hitherto been consigned to helpless, hopeless idiocy.”—*Brit. and For. Med. Review*, xvii. 516.

“How delightful is this ! It is almost worth the suffering of the calamity to have so truly benevolent an institution spring from it. This, indeed, if not one of the final causes of calamity in this world, is one of its compensating blessings, to give men opportunity for the growth and discipline of charity and love.”—CHEEVER’S *Pilgrim in the Shadow of the Jungfrau*.

INTRODUCTION.

ON the occasion of his late visit to this country, Dr. Guggenbühl put into my hands the manuscript of the documents which now form the greater part of this volume, with a request that I should have them published here, in any form that might appear the most likely to extend a knowledge of the interesting subject to which they refer.

It is with great pleasure that I now discharge the duty thus imposed upon me. In common with all who have inquired into the dreadful evils of Cretinism on the one hand, and have heard of the zeal, energy, and success of Dr. Guggenbühl's treatment of it on the other, I feel convinced that the *hospice* of the Abendberg must be regarded as one of the most remarkable fruits of Christian beneficence which this age has produced. I therefore esteem it no ordinary privilege to be permitted to contribute something, however little, towards the making

known more widely the object and results of that noble institution.

It will be at once apparent to the reader that the eulogistic descriptions of the Abendberg hospital, contained in the following pages, have been written with the single view of commending it to the attention and patronage of the British public—particularly of that rather numerous portion of it which annually migrates to the lovely valleys and mountains of Switzerland, to luxuriate in their enchanting scenes. It is allowable, on our part, to remind the reader that yet another purpose may be served by a perusal of this little book, namely, the exciting in his mind of a desire to see similar efforts put forth in his own country on behalf of the like misery which exists in it—misery as deep and afflictive, at least, as the Cretinism of Switzerland. Especially is it allowable to deduce from the results of Dr. Guggenbühl's successful experiments in the treatment of a malady formerly considered as hopelessly intractable, the highly important conclusion, that what has been done for the poor goitrous Cretin of the Valais, may be done for the infant idiots of our city poor—a numerous class, hitherto neglected, and doomed to live and die like the beasts of the field. It may be, and probably is the case, that there is a specialty in the condition of

the Cretin, which makes his treatment more hopeful than that of the ordinary idiot, even in the most favourable circumstances; still, it is obvious that the success accorded to the labours of Dr. Guggenbühl is admirably fitted to encourage all who, in other countries, are compassing the good of the most degraded of their species, to attempt, by all possible means, to rescue even the poor idiot from the neglect to which he has hitherto been consigned. It may not be possible in all cases in this country to subject idiocy to the same favourable change of physical circumstances as Cretinism experiences, when it is removed from the humid depths of valleys to the free air of the uplands; still, we are constrained to try what can be done to approximate to it. Dr. Guggenbühl's intelligent children, set free from the inanity of that hideous state in which, but for his exertions, they would certainly have dragged out their weary lives, cry aloud to us to take up the cause of the idiot—they provoke us to the like labour of love which saved them. And most cheering is it to learn that the cry has not reached Britain in vain. It is already more than two years since a lady at Bath was struck forcibly by Dr. Twining's interesting account of the Abendberg retreat, and determined to have the same plan tried in her own neighbourhood: she invited a few

other ladies to join her in the attempt, and the result was, the establishment of a school for fifteen idiot children, for each of whom £10 a-year are paid. Very lately a similar school was opened at Wells; and in the metropolis, ten months ago, a new Society was organized on a large scale for the express purpose of "providing an asylum for the care and education of the idiot, so as to prepare him as far as possible for the duties and enjoyments of life." The locality selected for the London institution is at Highgate—a situation as good for the object, perhaps, as any in the south of England. It may yet be found, however, that the physical treatment of the young idiots, upon which their progress in intellectual and moral attainments so much depends, is greatly aided by their constantly breathing the air of places more elevated than Highgate. These schools and the Asylum must be regarded as amongst the fruits of Dr. Guggenbühl's unwearied toil. Their promoters were stimulated by his unexpected success; they were encouraged to go and do likewise in their own spheres, where they saw objects as needful of the same care as were the Cretins of Switzerland. And doubtless they will have their reward. May their labours of love be abundantly blessed! and may they have the satisfaction of seeing the cause of the poor idiot taken up

in good earnest throughout the land, in such a manner as that henceforth he shall not be doomed either to a life-long imprisonment or to the contemptuous treatment of his neighbour, but shall be laid hold of in infancy, and subjected to the stimulating effects of all the means, physical and moral, which have been found to act so beneficially on the Cretin.

But it is not only in Britain that the example set by the good physician of the Abendberg has been followed to a certain extent. Both Wurtemberg and Saxony now possess asylums for idiots, in imitation of the Swiss one. Prussia is engaged in preparations to the same end; and, very recently, Dr. Guggenbühl has been summoned by the Austrian Government to Salzburg, there to establish an hospital for the treatment of the Cretins who swarm in the neighbouring valleys. Afterwards he goes, on the like errand, to Turin, where his system is to be tried on a large scale on the Cretins of Piedmont.

The simple fact that Dr. Guggenbühl's labours have already attracted so much attention, and led to such results, is of itself proof enough of their intrinsic worth and importance. Many more words are therefore unnecessary to commend them to the reader. But doubtless some, into whose hands these pages are likely to come, will desire to be furnished with a little information concerning the unfortunate

objects of Dr. Guggenbühl's beneficent operations, and to become acquainted with his personal history and with his plans of treatment. And such information we shall now proceed very briefly to supply.

I. THE NATURE AND HISTORY OF CRETINISM.

Amongst the 2,188,000 souls, forming the population of Confederate Switzerland, there are about 20,000 persons afflicted with Cretinism in a greater or less degree : about 8000 of these, it is calculated, are truly idiots ; while the others labour under various kinds of bodily and mental infirmities, sufficient to mark the existence of the same malady, but not to prevent them from engaging in the ordinary occupations of life.

The physical indications of Cretinism are generally apparent within the first year after birth. The child's head is disproportionately large and misshapen ; its lips, tongue, and throat have a swollen appearance. In many the skin is very pallid or sallow, and wrinkled ; the hair is white, the flesh soft, the organs of the body generally appear imperfectly developed, and the stature low. As the child advances in age, its intellectual and moral defects become more and more obvious. All the

senses are dull, and the mind is imperfectly roused by their feeble action. Sensibility is so blunt that they seem to feel neither blows nor wounds. Many Cretins are dumb, "not merely because they cannot hear, but because the organ of speech is unable to express thought, even if it were conceived." Often the only sound that is uttered is like the cry of one of the lower animals. Very many are affected with goîtres, which, in the older Cretins, sometimes attain a great size; and other symptoms of a scrofulous constitution are apparent in all. Many are subject to fits of raving, resembling paroxysms of mania. In extreme cases there is presented a hideous combination of deformities, so that the poor creatures cannot be seen by one unaccustomed to the sight without exciting feelings of deep disgust: they are so weak as to be unable to walk, or, at the best, they do so with a waddling gait; they cannot even feed themselves. The eyelids quiver, and the eyeballs, large, red, and prominent, roll continually or squint; the countenance has a vacant expression; the swollen tongue is protruded; saliva runs from the gaping mouth; the distorted, rickety limbs move convulsively; the manifestations of mind are the feeblest possible, excepting in so far as the action of some of the animal propensities is concerned. "It creates a solemn awe in the soul," says Cheever, "to

look upon one of these Cretins, in whom the mind does not seem so much deranged as departed—gone utterly—not a gleam of the spirit left, the household dog looking incomparably more human. It is a dreadful sight.” “Who is this melancholy creature which bears the human form in its lowest and most repulsive expression? . . . this loathsome idiotic being hears not, speaks not, and only now and then utters a coarse, wild, inarticulate sound.” . . . “At first sight we should be inclined to take this wretched being for a gigantic polypus, something in imitation of a man, for it scarcely moves—it creeps with the painful heaviness of the sloth; and yet it is the monarch of the earth, but dethroned and degraded—it is a Cretin.”* Yet even such have been rescued from their loathsomeness, and converted into sightly and intelligent members of society; blessed, and made blessings. Cretinism, in many instances, is hereditary, but sometimes Cretin parents have healthy children.

By modern psychologists, Cretinism is regarded as the highest degree of idiocy, combined with bodily degeneracy, and with certain peculiarities dependent on its endemic character. Knolz believes that its essence consists in “predominant activity

* Berchtold-Beaupré, Dissert. sur les Crétins, p. 2.

of the ganglionic and imperfect development of the cerebral system, and finds therein an explanation, not only of the phenomena observed during life, but also that of the remarkably developed sympathetic nerve.”*

As to the proximate cause of Cretinism, it is probably formed of a combination of noxious influences, no one of which, acting separately, would be adequate to the production of the terrible effect. Although one of the most frequent conditions of its occurrence appears to be warm moisture in low situations, this is by no means essential, for it sometimes is met with in open and apparently dry places.

Dr. Guggenbühl divides the Cretins into four classes :—

1. *The Atrophied Cretins.* Those whose bodies are much emaciated, and their extremities paralyzed. In these he believes that the spinal marrow is chiefly affected.

2. *The Rickety Cretins.* Those whose bones are soft, and have their limbs bent in consequence.

3. *The Hydrocephalic Cretins.* Those who are affected with chronic water-in-the-head.

4. *The Cretins diseased from birth.* In these some

* Feuchtersleben's Principles of Medical Psychology, p. 307.

of the worst symptoms appear ; and they prove the most intractable. Nevertheless it is remarked, that where a goître exists at birth the brain is less affected than in other cases.

Individuals are to be found in whose persons all these conditions exist together ; and others there are who present various combinations of the symptoms ; but in all the classes goîtres are seen frequently. The manifestations of the mental powers and moral feelings vary much in all the classes, and correspond pretty exactly with the greater or less activity of the organs of the senses.

It is well known that Cretinism occurs chiefly amongst the inhabitants of the lower parts and the shady sides of narrow valleys in the higher ranges of the Alps. In the more open places, and at elevations of 4000 feet and upwards, the disease is seldom met with. It would appear that in the deepest valleys, and even at particular spots in these valleys, the worst cases occur. In his account of the Cretins, Dr. Reeve remarks that he found many bad cases in one small village in adjoining houses, " which were built under ledges of the rocks, and all of them very filthy, very hot, and miserable " * The children of the poor are more frequently affected

* Edin. Med. and Surg. Journal, vol. v.

than those of persons in more comfortable circumstances. At Münt, in a poor population of 100, thirty are Cretins.*

Numerous as these miserable objects still are, they are unquestionably less so than they were a century ago. This diminution in their number seems to be owing chiefly to the improvement which has gradually taken place in the style of the habitations of the poorer classes, to the draining of marshes, the cutting down of woods, the discouragement of marriages amongst Cretins, and the greater care exercised

* “ In the valley of Ollomont, as at Aoste, the enjoyment of natural beauty is rendered impossible by the loathsome deformity of the inhabitants ; we were really shocked to find that none of the villages through which we passed seemed to contain one reasonable human being :—goîtres and Cretinism appeared universal and inseparable. Repeatedly I tried to obtain an answer to a simple question from the most rational looking of the inhabitants, but in vain. This astonished and shocked us, for we were still at a height of 4000 English feet above the sea, where these maladies commonly disappear ; and we looked forwards with despair to the prospect of obtaining a guide for the difficult and unknown country which we were next to traverse from amongst such a population. But in this, as in very many similar cases, first appearances are not to be interpreted to the letter.” On further inquiry it was found, that “ the effective population” we mostly absent in attendance on a fête at the chief place of the district, and that “ others were with their herds in the mountains.”—*Professor Forbes’s Travels through the Alps of Savoy*, p. 271.

by the parents in sending their affected children, for a certain period of the year, to their *chalets* on the alpine heights.

It must not be imagined that Cretinism exists only in Switzerland: it is seen also amongst the mountains of Carinthia, along the banks of the Danube, and in the valleys of the Pyrenees; also in the highlands of Madagascar, in Kemaon, within the ranges of the Himalayas, and, according to Sir George Staunton, even in Chinese Tartary.

II. DR. GUGGENBÜHL'S HISTORY.

Such was the miserable condition (as described above) of many thousands of human beings, and these inhabitants of some of the loveliest spots in the known world, when Dr. Guggenbühl was raised up to act as their deliverer, and to prove that even such humiliating degradation is susceptible of relief through the agency of well-devised and patiently executed plans of treatment, physical and moral.

Although Fodéré,* nearly fifty years ago, and Wenzel,† about the same time, very clearly pointed out the advantages likely to result from the removal

* *Traité du goître et du crétinisme*, 1800.

† *Ueber den Kretinismus*. Vienna, 1802.

of the Cretins out of their steamy dens, and causing them to breathe a more salubrious air ; and although Reeves, in 1809, affirmed that "Cretinism might be prevented by taking children out of the confined and dirty places where it prevails, and nursing and educating them in the higher parts of the mountains," it does not appear that any one had endeavoured to carry these principles fully into effect until Guggenbühl began his experiments in 1839.

It was in the course of a tour amongst the high Alps, made in 1836, that he first became specially interested in the Cretins. He saw and felt deeply for their wretchedness ; he resolved to study their condition minutely, and for this purpose gave himself wholly to their service, and lived for two years amongst them in the small and retired village of Sernf, in the Canton Glarus. After this he made another journey through one of the most mountainous regions of Switzerland, the result of which was, that the subject took still stronger possession of his mind, and "the idea weighed more and more heavily upon him that this numerous and degraded class of beings who filled the valleys were left to sink deeper in their misery, without one effort being made to help them."* Dr. Guggenbühl now brought the

* Some account of Cretinism, &c., by W. Twining, M.D. 1843.

subject before the Swiss Association for the Advancement of Science, and requested its countenance and aid in his purpose of forming an institution for the treatment of Cretinism. His request was granted, and he received from the Cantonal Government of Berne, in consequence of the representations in favour of his schemes made by the Association, the sum of 600 Swiss francs, wherewith to make a commencement of his undertaking.

In 1840 the *hospice* of the Abendberg was opened for the reception of patients. A very few entered at first; but the results were so speedily encouraging, that after only two months' trial of his plans, Dr. Guggenbühl resolved to dedicate his life and all his powers to the work, and, regardless of all difficulties, to strive to realize the wish which, day and night, was the continual subject of his thoughts. From such a spirit, animated, doubtless, by true Christian principles, great things were to be expected; and hitherto the philanthropic physician has been enabled to persevere most steadily, amidst frequent discouragements, in the self-denying and almost herculean task which he set for himself. How much patience, how much pure benevolence, how much faith, how much zeal, are required for the laborious occupations of the Abendberg, can be conceived of only by those who have had personal experience of

intercourse with their fellow-creatures in the lowest phases of poverty, disease, and ignorance.*

Dr. Guggenbühl is a native of Meilen, in the Canton of Zurich; by faith, a Protestant.

III. THE SYSTEM OF TREATMENT PURSUED IN THE ABENDBERG.

The great leading principle on which Dr. Guggenbühl's treatment is founded, is, that the immaterial and immortal soul is alike in all men, and that the varieties which exist in the manifestations of its faculties depend upon the differences in the degree of perfection possessed by its external envelope, the body; and, as a consequence of this, that the more complete and normal the state of the bodily functions is, the more freely do the mental faculties exhibit themselves.

Cretinism, then, being the effect of a diseased state of the body, is regarded by Dr. Guggenbühl as amenable to proper treatment, just as is any other

* "I know not that the history of philanthropy contains a finer passage than is furnished by the benevolent labours of Dr. Guggenbühl." . . . "To such devoted and self-denying philanthropy, it is impossible to pay too high a meed of praise." —The Rev. Dr. W. L. Alexander's "Switzerland and the Swiss Churches," pp. 112, 114.

morbid condition ; and he hopes, by improving as far as possible the bodily health, to admit of the powers of the intellect and the moral feelings being brought into play, and then subjected to suitable training.

Dr. Guggenbühl learned from the experience of the past, that, if young children affected with cretinism be taken from their native valleys to the Alpine heights, for even a few months of the summer, their general health is greatly improved, and their physical and mental defects are diminished. He therefore resolved that the situation of his proposed infirmary should be a very elevated one : and he chose for the subjects of his experiments the youngest Cretins he could find.

To form a nursery for invalid children, of from one year to six years of age, at an elevation of 4000 feet above the level of the sea, and in the vicinity of glaciers, and that not merely for the summer, but for the whole year, was certainly a bold step ; but bolder still was the determination on the part of the warm-hearted projector to become, in his own person, the director of the establishment, as well as the physician and teacher of the little patient-pupils. There he was, a man of highly cultivated mind and refined tastes, shut up for months together, far away from the amenities of social life, with few compa-

nions but those idiot children, of whom scarcely one was able to reciprocate the smiles of tenderness and love he bestowed upon them ! Can anything be conceived of requiring more self-denial, patience, and resolution ?

It is not far from the summit of the Abendberg, on an open space of grass-land, that Dr. Guggenbühl's cottages are situated. It is in summer a lovely spot. The views of the neighbouring Alps, the Mönch, the Eiger, and the Jungfrau, the lake of Brienz, and of the celebrated green valley of Interlachen, are magnificent. The combination of beauty and grandeur in the scene is almost unrivalled. The effect of it on the opening minds of the young patients is, doubtless, highly favourable to their development. There are here excellent and abundant springs, and the soil is so productive, and the temperature so high, that ordinary esculent vegetables, and even grain and maize grow and ripen well. Poultry and goats also are reared : so that the little colony is almost self-supporting. The winter's cold is not so great, nor the fall of snow so deep on the summit of the Abendberg, as in most other parts of the Alps at the same elevation.

It appears that of the true Cretin children treated in this Alpine retreat, already about one-third have returned to their families, more or less completely

restored to health in body and in mind. Some appear to have been completely cured, and rendered as capable of ordinary education as the most healthy children. Dr. Guggenbühl desires that the children should continue at the Abendberg for not less than three years, to do justice to his treatment. Some may require five or six years' residence. But many are removed by their parents too soon, and fall back after their return home.*

The following is an outline of the treatment pursued :—Removed to the Abendberg as soon as possible after being weaned, the children are committed to the immediate care of nurses, by whom they are bathed, fed with goat's milk, carried out and laid in the sun on the grass, and amused, when they are capable of being so. After some time, when the bodily vigour is obviously increased, (“when vegetative life begins to recover,”) and the children have attained a suitable age, attempts are made to rouse their intellectual powers through the organs of sense. These efforts are first directed to the ear. Tubes and speaking-trumpets of different sizes are

* An interesting instance of the complete cure of Cretinism was presented in the person of a Dr. Odet, latterly of Montpellier, who in childhood was a Cretin, but recovered, passed through a professional education, and became the author of a book on Cretinism.

used : the sound addressed to the dull auditory nerve of the Cretin must be loud, else it makes no impression. The child is then taught or coaxed to imitate the motions of the lips and tongue required to give utterance to the sound roared into the ear, and by repetition it learns to connect the sound it hears with the attempt to make it ; then it tries to articulate, and so, by slow degrees, it gets through the vowels. The eye and the sense of touch are then exercised in connexion with the results of the first series of lessons. The letters are presented in a large form, carved in wood : the child handles them and learns to associate the sound with the letter. Words are formed and learned in the same manner. Then the pupil advances to the application of words to objects. Figures of household utensils are laid before the child and named ; by and bye he places the articles themselves upon their pictures. When much difficulty is experienced in getting the attention fixed in this way, the child is taken into a dark room, and is shown the forms of letters and objects pourtrayed on the wall by means of phosphorus. The illuminated figures sometimes arrest the attention more effectually than anything else ; and a beginning having once been made, the progress is steady. The senses of smell and taste are also in constant need of cultivation. Some Cretin children

swallow whatever substance is placed in the mouth, however nauseous; and they seem to be wholly unconscious of differences of odour.

“Gymnastic exercises, which require the daily use of every muscle, are very important, and excite the children to emulation in their feats; whilst the exercise of the faculties of the mind is equally carried on in mental gymnastics, according to the powers of each little scholar. Music has been found to be a powerful aid—soothing, interesting, and refining; and we can bear witness ourselves to the thrilling effect of the voices of the happy little group, who sang to us in their infantine manner the praises of their God. Few persons, we think, could have restrained their tears while listening to that infant choir, and reflecting that but for the Christian love which has watched over them, their voices might still have uttered nothing but groans, and their souls remained ignorant of God their Maker.”*

Dr. Twining has supplied us with a description of the scene presented by the inmates of the *hospice* engaged in their every-day occupations, which gives a good idea of the style of Dr. Guggenbühl’s pro-

* The above sentences are extracted from an excellent account of the Abendberg institution, published in Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal in May 1848. It is the production of the same pen that wrote the pages which follow this introduction.

ceedings. “The scene was most impressive ; our visit was unexpected, and we found Dr. Guggenbühl engaged in instructing his little patients. His fatherly smile, and the kind manner of his assistant, were not lost even on these scarcely human beings, for several would look up with an expression of happiness. A more strange or more interesting school-room was never seen ; to watch the familiar process by which we all unconsciously learn to speak in infancy, here adopted to teach children of any age under six, systematically and with effort, was a matter of deep interest. Here, indeed, was a task of real difficulty, as the organs, far from being ready and eager to receive impressions, were so dull that the strongest means were needed to make them act in any degree. Several of the children were ranged round a table, in chairs formed to support those who could not otherwise sit upright ; in nearly all there were the evident signs of their fearful malady, and the dull hopeless look of almost perfect idiocy. On a bed on one side of the room lay one poor creature, who was too great a sufferer to be yet able to join in the instruction which the others were receiving.

“She was wrapped in a cloth, so that her face only was visible. The lids of the eyes were constantly quivering and the eyes rolling—the tongue large and so swollen that the saliva was running

from her mouth, and all her limbs were moving convulsively. So dreadful a sight could scarcely be imagined." * * * "When the hour of instruction closed, came that of amusement, and here the Doctor's kind manner was equally conspicuous, whether the child was swinging, playing with a doll, or beating a drum, or still sitting unconscious of all around it. Day and night the sole thought of this zealous and benevolent man is the happiness and improvement of these poor creatures; in him they have at once a father, teacher, and physician, well qualified by natural disposition and acquired attainments to act in all those characters."

Dr. Guggenbühl has the advantage of being aided in his work by an admirable assistant. This man has the happy faculty of descending with the utmost simplicity, patience, and benevolence, to the level of his stupid little scholars; and then, with inimitable perseverance, he labours to excite some mental emotion. However slight that may be, he seizes upon it eagerly whenever it appears, and keeps his hold of it as of the end of a thread, which will certainly enable him to draw out more. He then carefully proceeds, eliciting most gradually the feeble manifestations of thought and feeling, which are thenceforth strengthened by skilfully managed exercise.

As to the physical management of the children—

in addition to the daily use of baths, as mentioned above, much importance is attached to the occasional employment of electricity, and to frictions with some aromatic herbs. But perhaps no remedial agent is so powerful in contributing to the restoration of health as the constant breathing of the pure air of the mountain. In some of the goître cases, and in the rickety Cretins, medicine is used freely, particularly the iodide and other salts of iron, quinine, and cod-liver oil.

It is when the convalescence is established that especial attention is given to the religious instruction of the children. Not but that at any time after the commencement of intellectual activity the truths of the gospel may be received, to the comfort and edification of the spirit struggling with its cumbersome load of a morbid body, but only, that, humanly speaking, and in general, the Cretin is not able to give due heed to his spiritual concerns, nor to appreciate the importance of Divine revelation.

And now, in conclusion, a few words must be added on what may be regarded as *the practical application* of our review of the labours of the philanthropist of the Abendberg and their results, namely, the consideration of what ought to be done for *idiocy*, in imitation of what Dr. Guggenbühl has done for *Cretinism*.

Although all Cretins are not idiots, and *vice versa*, it is obvious that, in a great majority of the former, the manifestation of mind is prevented by causes perfectly similar to those which are connected with the more ordinary forms of idiocy, such as we see them in this and in other civilized countries. If, therefore, many Cretins, even those who seem to be the most idiotic, are susceptible of improvement under treatment, many idiots are likely to be so too. And, if they *can be*, they *ought to be* educated. If it be true that Dr. Guggenbühl has been instrumental in enabling even a very few persons to exchange the senseless torpor of Cretinism for the activity, usefulness, and enjoyments of social and intellectual life, and to awake to a consciousness of religious responsibility, and to the exercise of the moral feelings, then, assuredly, no idiot ought to be allowed to grow up without at least an attempt being made to improve his physical and moral state, and to rescue him from impending degradation. It is while he is young that he must have the opportunity given to him of becoming, if possible, a useful member of society. Undoubtedly there are some whose physical conformation is such as to oppose insurmountable obstacles to the success of the training process; yet, exclusively of such cases, there are numbers who, at present, are regarded as

hopelessly sunk in idiocy, and who are daily grieved over by afflicted parents, who might be retrieved, and rendered blessings to their friends and to society. They who now know nothing, wish for nothing, and do nothing, may yet, through education, become intelligent, reflective, and useful. The accomplishment of such an end cannot be attained without great exertions and inexhaustible patience; and, to do justice to the poor objects of the treatment, even the most hopeless cases must be subjected to it; for sometimes the worst complications of idiocy with palsy, epilepsy and chorea, have been greatly benefited by proper means. It is only after the failure of these means, used very assiduously, that even such cases can be pronounced incurable. From the extensive series of experiments on the treatment of idiocy, made at the hospital of Bicêtre in Paris, by M. Seguin,* it results that it is impossible to determine what cases may be benefited by treatment, and what not, without actually making the trial. M. Seguin's success is corroborative of the conclusions arrived at by Dr. Guggenbühl, as to the great improvement which many cases are susceptible of in the manifestation of intellect after due training, and is quite sufficient to encourage others to

* See Note, page 33.

attempt to benefit even the worst cases, although, indeed, the labour must be great.

If the attempt should ever be made in this country to educate idiots in a proper manner, they must be subjected to treatment in their earliest years, and all, without exception, must be placed in the same favourable circumstances. And why should not this be attempted? It appears to me that public economics, no less than considerations of Christian charity, demand that it should. Already, and for many years past, it has been usual in large towns to confine in asylums all adult idiots, whose habits make them either disgusting or troublesome to the public. They are incarcerated for life, and cost the community for their board, &c., a large sum annually. No attempt, excepting the very recent ones formerly referred to, has hitherto been made to train and educate them. Yet it cannot now be doubted that some, perhaps many of them, might have been delivered from their idiocy, if they had been properly treated while young. They might have been so far improved by a few years of timeously applied education, as to have been rendered capable of conducting themselves rationally, and of labouring for their own subsistence. Parochial allowances of £10 or £12 per annum, for three or five years, bestowed upon them in their youth, might have

prevented the necessity of expending £15 or £20 a-year for the whole term of their existence after maturity. The saving to the public purse, by adopting the plan of educating the young, is sufficiently obvious. Undoubtedly the removal of the idiot from our streets was productive of no small comfort to the community at large; but wiser and better still will be the seeking for him in infancy, and trying to deliver him from his bondage, so as to enable him to take a part in social life, with decency and with advantage to his fellows.

It would not be difficult to obtain pretty accurate data for estimating the numbers and condition generally of the young in this country affected with idiocy. Such an estimate would be essential to the proper arrangement of ulterior measures. So far as the poor are concerned, (and it is amongst them that the largest proportion of idiots exists,) the necessary information might be collected from the parish-inspectors; and a set of queries, addressed to medical practitioners, would bring out an approximation, at least, to the truth relative to the amount in other classes. By whom the initiative in this inquiry ought to be taken, may be a matter of doubt; but, as it ought to extend over the whole kingdom, and be as thorough as possible, perhaps a special commission, appointed by Government,

would best effect the object. By a well-arranged system of inquiry, and by personal inspection of a few districts, in various parts of the kingdom, aided by examinations of persons able to give accurate information on the subject, a few active commissioners might speedily collect all the data necessary for establishing, on a proper foundation, some general scheme of education and training for all the idiot children in the kingdom.

Until this national effort be put forth, we must rest satisfied with such partial attempts to do something for the poor idiot as have recently been made in England, particularly in the establishment of "The Asylum for Idiots" at Highgate. Should this institution receive public support in the measure which it deserves, it will soon present an excellent model for similar retreats, which, it is to be hoped, will ere long be formed in different parts of the United Kingdom. Then, indeed, will be presented to the world a beautiful instance of the extensive good which may result to suffering and degraded humanity, from the example of a single individual who, with self-denying zeal, sets himself to work for the benefit of his fellow-creatures.

NOTE ON M. SEGUIN'S SYSTEM OF EDUCATION
FOR IDIOTS.

To M. Seguin's success in the training of idiots, Dr. Conolly bears the following high testimony in his account of a visit which he paid to the Asylum of the Bicêtre three years ago : " We saw no fewer than forty idiots under the direction of a very able school-master, M. Seguin, endowed with that enthusiasm respecting his occupation before which difficulties vanish. In all these cases, the crowning glory of the attempt is, that, whilst the senses, the muscular powers, and the intellect, have received some cultivation, the habits have been improved, the propensities regulated, and some play has been given to the affections ; so that a wild ungovernable animal, calculated to excite fear, aversion, or disgust, has been transformed into the likeness and manners of a man. It is difficult to avoid falling into the language of enthusiasm on beholding such an apparent miracle."

As it is to the introduction of a system of education for idiots, similar to that pursued by M. Seguin, that we desire to look, as the result of our interest in the experiments of the Abendberg and of the Bicêtre, a few words descriptive of the latter will not be misplaced here.

M. Seguin begins by using various means to develop *the muscular system*, he then proceeds to the education of *the intellect*, and, latterly, he endeavours to have *the will* subjected to the guidance of an enlightened *conscience*.

I. *The education of the muscular system*.—The steadiness and energy of the action of the muscles depend entirely on the state of the nervous system, which, in idiots, is always disordered. Nevertheless it is, in a great measure, by the due regulation of the muscular movements that the nervous functions are strengthened.

In exercising his pupils, M. Seguin aims at causing them to put forth their strength moderately, but to continue to do so steadily for a certain fixed time. His apparatus for exercise consists of a table, a balance, a ladder, and dumb-bells. Seeing that prehension always precedes walking in infancy, the idiots are at first made to climb up and down on the ladder, secured to it by a moveable belt ; and, by a little management, the instinct of self-preservation is brought into play, so as to cause the hand to take fast hold of the steps to prevent falling. Thus, the muscles gradually learn to contract energetically, and the limbs to bear weights and shocks, which previously would have overwhelmed them. After this, the power gained is applied to the taking of food, to the lifting and carrying of stones, and the handling of various implements. Then the dumb-bells are used ; also the balance, which is a bar of wood, with a heavy wooden knob at either end, intended to be raised by the hands above the head, so as to make the child stand erect and walk steadily. It seems to be essential to the child's locomotive energies being rendered perfectly submissive to the will, that he should, in the first place, learn to stand still. This is accomplished by having his feet fixed in boxes, while his hands swing the dumb-bells. But some require even to be taught to *sit* still. Gradually, all are taught, and sometimes at the expense of great trouble on the part of the teacher, to use the fingers in the actions necessary to daily life ; such as to tie, to button, to fold, to wash, to comb, &c. ; and, subsequently, to cut, to saw, to plane, to draw, &c.

II. Then follows the education of the senses, beginning with touch, thence proceeding to the exercise and improvement of sight, hearing, taste, and smell.

Touch is exercised by submitting to the patients various substances of different qualities and at different temperatures, such as oils and astringent substances ; bodies rough and smooth, hard and soft, heavy and light, differing in size and form, and causing them to remark and describe their several qualities.

The education of *sight* requires the greatest care and perseverance, because the eye cannot be mechanically directed according to the will of the teacher. M. Seguin's first aim is to fix the pupil's wandering eye. This is attempted, *first*, by presenting to it, while the child is shut up in a dark room, one luminous point, which can be moved about. The pupil, seeing nothing else, is constrained to fix his eye upon this moving light ; and, *secondly*, by the teacher placing the child before him, and endeavouring to provoke his attention by following his rolling eye with a firm and steadfast gaze. This is found to be a very difficult process in some cases. The child shrinks from the teacher's look, and closes its eyelids. In one instance, the trial was persevered in for four months without success ; at last the pupil's eye was conquered, and he cried. The next day, the child looked at the teacher's countenance as at something he had never seen before ; and gradually the power of fixing the eye in attentive scrutiny was acquired. Control over the movements of the eye having been attained to, the pupil is next taught to distinguish colours and forms. Whenever he begins to take pleasure in seeing images of objects, his taste is cultivated by his being shewn good pictures and statues, of which he is required to give an account. The education of *the ear* is generally as easy in idiots as that of the eye is difficult. Most idiots are very fond of music ; many sing well although they speak badly. Some, who are in their ordinary state torpid and dull, show the strongest emotions of pleasure during the performance of lively airs ; their countenances beam with joy ; the hairs of the head stand erect, the fingers are moved rapidly, the forehead and hands are bathed in perspiration : but they fall back into torpidity immediately on the cessation of the music. M. Seguin mentions an idiot who could repeat difficult tunes after once hearing them, who yet could never articulate more than the word *papa*, and even that imperfectly. Although *the senses of taste and smell* have but little influence on the operations of the intellect, M. Seguin considers it

of importance to attend to their due development. In the idiot they are generally obtuse, and require to be roused : this is done by applying such articles as cayenne pepper, mint, and colocynth, to the tongue and nose. After the senses have been awakened, they are taught to distinguish between more ordinary odours and tastes.

III. *Drawing* is next taught ; but it generally demands much labour on the part of both teacher and pupil. M. Seguin says that he has “laboured at intervals for a fortnight in teaching a child to make a straight line.” He observes that, in drawing lines so as to form figures, the idiots experience great difficulty in making a square, while the triangle is formed much more easily. After drawing, writing is taught, care being taken to have the letters learned in a certain order, according to the analogies of their form ; e. g. O next to I, B to P, T to L, &c. This last lesson is, of course, easily made preparative to the acquisition of the sounds of letters, the meanings of words, and intelligent reading. At first, the pupil is not allowed to read a word without understanding it ; and, accordingly, it ought always to be the name of an object of sense. Every person and thing about the pupil should be named ; and then the names written and pronounced. Grammar is taught very much by illustrations addressed immediately to the senses. The object itself is set before the pupil, and the various words descriptive of its properties are written. The powers of verbs and their tenses are also shown by examples as far as possible.

Success in such a course of education implies, of course, a greater or less degree of memory ; but in many idiots this faculty is most defective. In these M. Seguin begins to exercise the memory by first showing them their food, then removing it, and asking them what it was. After this, they are required to name the food they have eaten. Thence, a transition is made to questions about what has been seen and heard, &c. Forethought, and provision for the future, are taught, with the help

of all the ordinary occupations of life. The pupil is required to order his meals, and is denied, at least part of them, if he should forget to do so. He awakes in the morning, and finds that he has no shoes, because he neglected to order them, &c. *Arithmetic* is taught, as far as possible, by objects. M. Seguin makes use of balls, marked with numbers ; and to teach readiness in calculation, the pupils are taken to shops to buy articles for their own use. Some acquaintance with the principles of natural history and classification is obtained by frequent inspection of domestic animals, which the pupils are required to feed regularly, and to clean.

To teach geography at first by means of maps would be impossible ; but the teacher begins by measuring distances before his pupil, and causing him to compare them ; he then proceeds to point out the relative positions of adjoining objects, and the distances between them. They walk together from village to village, and mark their progress by measurements, which are afterwards transferred to the map.

Bad habits of attitudes and manners, as well as unseemly tricks of all sorts, are very commonly met with in idiots ; and are sometimes the cause of much trouble to the teacher ; but by perseverance even the most inveterate of these may be overcome.

“ The manners and gestures should be taught to approach as nearly as possible to those among whom the idiot lives, so as not to disgust ; and to render his tastes useful he must be taught to work.”—(*Brit. and For. Med. Review*, xxiv. 14.)

IV. M. Seguin's moral treatment of idiots is based upon the simple principle of the pupil's will being made submissive to that of the teacher, as the first step. The pupil must begin by being passive, afterwards, as the end of his education, his own free-will is brought into activity. It is essential to the obtaining a complete mastery over his pupils, that the teacher have special qualifications for his duties. In particular, he must have the

faculty of commanding, and, at the same time, he must possess great calmness of mind and manner. "If he has never had occasion to exercise that self-control which produces this calm, no better opportunity of self-conquest than the education of an idiot can be afforded, for no other occupation demands more patience, more observation, more concentrated action, more calmness."

THE ABENDBERG,

AN HOSPITAL FOR INFANT CRETINS IN THE CANTON OF
BERNE, SWITZERLAND, FOUNDED IN MDCCCXL.

BY DR. GUGGENBÜHL.

“ How fair thy form, Oh Charity !”

WHERE the arrowy and silvery Aar flows from the Lake of Brienz to throw itself into the still lovelier Lake of Thun, rises a majestic mountain, called by the poetic name of the Abendberg—the mountain of the setting sun. It is crowned with pasturage, and visited by herds and people while summer reigns on the Alpine heights ; but when the wintry winds are let loose, it becomes a solitary waste of snow, deserted by its annual visitors.

Let the traveller climb its steep ascent with me, and, turning, admire the surpassing beauty of its

bird's eye view. Let him gaze on the enchanting lakes at his feet, the smiling villages, the neat town of Unterseen gleaming in the bright sunshine, the woods, the rocks, the pine forests, the surrounding fastnesses of Helvetian independence, and well earned glory.

Let his eye track the steamer, with her long line of light, and leave it to gaze upon the eagle intent upon his prey, or the isolated cloud that hangs for an instant beneath us. Then let him raise it to the eternal hills, the snow-clad summits, the marvellous glaciers, and all the treasury of wonders which the God of nature has gathered here together to show his power and his love. What heart can remain insensible to such stupendous works, nor feel the majesty and excellence of the Invisible One?

'Tis true, and all true, but come with me; ascend the giant Abendberg still higher. Let your feet stand four thousand feet above the sea, and I will show you a still more lovely work, and still more affecting proof of the power and the tenderness of God.

Follow me into this Chalet where all looks mean and poor; tread with me these humble rooms; look on their inhabitants. What see you? A band of helpless children, apparently deprived by nature of

the ordinary powers of body and of mind, with vacant looks and awkward gait.

You are troubled, and you say, "What a sad assemblage of misery is here! What objects of pity! How humbling to human pride! How repulsive to human taste! What specimens of fallen man! Oh! let us leave these idiot laughs, these vacant eyes, and look once more on the bright page of nature."

Well, so we will; and, seated on this perfumed turf, rich with the treasures of the mountain flora, I will tell you what a human heart has thought and felt and done for these outcasts of society, whose very presence is oppressive to you, even for a few minutes.

An humble unobtrusive man—whose name but lately was scarcely known in the country where he laboured for its afflicted inhabitants, and who asks no other reward than that of seeing them enjoy life and immortality—some years ago felt his heart warm towards an order of beings hitherto regarded as incurable, and he resolved, with marvellous courage, to endeavour to raise them to the rank of intelligent and responsible creatures. It is for this he has hung his nest so high, and that he braves the cold, the fatigue, and the disappointments inevitably attendant on such a life, and that he

succours, with all the powers of his mind, and all the resources of art, the rejected and despised *Cretin*.

Allow me to relate his history here, in sight of the realization of his long meditated, long cherished schemes of philanthropy, and recount how it was that the God of mercy put this beautiful thought into his all unselfish bosom, and sent him to raise the most abject of the human race, and place him beside his fellow-men in the same scale of existence. It *was* a beautiful thought. More beautiful even than that of Wilberforce and Clarkson, when they combated for the dark sons of Africa ; more beautiful even than that of Howard and Fry, when they opened the prison doors and spoke the language of love to their astonished inmates : and theirs are immortal names that shed lustre over the dark pages of history, and show that man, by the grace of God, is not always selfish and cruel.

Like them he has struggled, and still struggles, with the prejudices, the carelessness of mankind, the objections that are always presented to a new idea ; and, like them, he lives to see that his is not a wild reverie, a fanciful theory that practice cannot justify ; but, on the contrary, every year, from his mountain infirmary, go forth a troop of happy beings, whose healthy looks and grateful smiles,

whose accents of affection and tenderness, repay a thousand times all his paternal solicitude.

Yes, young traveller, the countenances that you beheld with such disgust will, we trust, ere long look on him as would the dead restored to life, and the suffering mind, and above all, the immortal soul will awaken under the magic power of his unpretending science. They will descend into their native valleys, and seek once more the bosom of their families, and bless the God who watched over them, and the benefactor whom He sent.

But I have not yet told you how this beautiful thought arose in his heart. Passing one day near a crucifix, such as are planted in almost all the villages of the Catholic Cantons of Switzerland, he saw an old and very degraded Cretin pause in his faltering walk, and mutter a something which was meant for a prayer.

Struck by the singularity of the action, he reflected on the spark of intelligence that must have lain dormant in this poor old creature, as well as on the perception on his part of a Being to whom prayer was to be made, and in a particular place. "There is then an immortal soul buried there," said he, "and I will dedicate my life to the deliverance of such."

From that hour he has continued his researches and

his labours ; he has founded this hospital for them “ in the name of God and of suffering humanity,” and there is a visible blessing on his work. Men rage in wild fury in the plains and in the valleys beneath him and around, and pursue their political animosities, and excite their rival passions, but peace and love are here. Charity, Christian charity, pursues her work, and benefits are largely poured on the afflicted of mankind.

And you, young traveller, you are from the shores of Albion ;—your speech, your look betray you. You come from a country which has done such great and magnificent works of the same kind, where the Christian and the philanthropist are hailed as brothers, to whatever land they may belong ; from a country of liberty like ours, one which has ever echoed every cry for help—spiritual or temporal, that arose from ours, and called us brothers in our hour of need.

Take then with you the indelible remembrance of what you have seen to-day, of moral as well as of material beauty. This view will rise before you in the visions of the night, and when the clear breeze sweeps past you in your own beloved country, forget not then the purer atmosphere of love in which you have moved, and remember those whom it is in your power also to help.

Remember, that in the narrow valleys of this magnificent country dwell a people apart, who may indeed be said to “ sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,” for whom the hopes and the joys of home, of affection, of all the powerful charities of life have been wiped away as with a sponge ; to whom the cheering name of a God and a Saviour has never been proclaimed.

Remember, that they ask of you no disgusting acts of Christian charity, no renunciation of the comforts and enjoyments of a happy life ; no leaving of friends and society, to consecrate a whole existence to the care of those so little cared for. We only ask what all can give, the sympathy, the interest, the intercessory prayers, the gift of superfluities, in short, the means of rescuing as many children as possible from the horrors of a miserable and useless existence ; of awaking with the beams of Divine love the sleeping chrysalis, and freeing the beautiful butterfly of the soul from the bier in which she lies.

Go, and tell them who are surrounded by their children in the enjoyment of mental and bodily health, who see with transport the daily unfolding of their immortal souls—tell them to think of the mothers in our beautiful Helvetia ; tell them to bless the Eternal One, who has placed their beloved off-

spring beyond the power of this scourge, and while they bless him, tell them to shed a tear and breathe a prayer for those who do not even know their state of degradation. Tell them, for every blessing they receive, and every transport they feel, to place an offering of gratitude on the altar of Christian love, and let them be assured, a double and a triple blessing will descend on those they love, and on themselves.

Your English mothers have sent out succour from afar to the oppressed negroes, and to the thoughtless Hindoo, the murderess of her living offspring. They have helped to teach the savage Zealander, the degraded Hottentot; their tenderness and womanly sympathy have penetrated into almost every dark corner of the heathen world.

Shall the same kind hand not be stretched forth to the sons and daughters of Helvetia? Will they wander through this glorious country, and catch health and rapture on these mountain tops—will they scatter their silver and their gold in the snow and on the highways, and not reserve a portion for its deepest and most heart-rending necessities?

And the bright and loving children of England! their zeal and charity once built, and rigged, and freighted with the ambassadors of Heaven, the good ship "*John Williams*;" will they not also think of

the hardy mountaineers ? They too have souls to save ; their country wants their services. There is grief in the Alpine chalet. There is sorrow even amidst the brightest works of nature. Where all is divine, and the Creator has placed his image more especially on the works of his hand, *there* languish the young. Think of them when you are sick ; think of them in your sports ; think of them when you pray, and stretch forth the same life-giving hand to the descendants of Tell and Zwingli.

L. G.

THE British public is already, in some measure, acquainted with the establishment on the Abendberg, and with its benevolent and philanthropic founder, Dr. Guggenbühl, a native of Zurich, and a Protestant, who has made the subject of Cretinism his peculiar study, and called the attention of most of the scientific societies in Switzerland and Germany to its causes and cure.

They have been informed of Dr. Guggenbühl's subsequent success in the Hospital, by the publication of Dr. Twining, who visited it immediately on its formation, and who has shown the encouraging results of the system of treatment pursued towards the Cretin children that have been brought to it.*

The following extracts, taken from various sources, some from published reports, others from private letters, will suffice to put the British reader in possession of the most recent results of Dr. Guggenbühl's labours, and will, at the same time, serve to prove how deep an impression has been made on many persons by a personal inspection of the wonderful success which, in several instances, has been attained to, in the attempt to ameliorate a form of human misery hitherto regarded as irremediable.

* *Some Account of Cretinism, and the Institution for its Cure on the Abendberg, in Switzerland.* By William Twining, M.D. Parker, London, 1843.

Essay upon Cretinism and Goître. By Edward Wells, M.D. Churchill, London, 1845.

EXTRACTS FROM DR. GUGGENBÜHL'S
LAST REPORT.

THE faculty of distinguishing right from wrong (or the force of conscience) shows itself strongly in some of the Cretins, and we have almost always remarked that when once their intelligence is awakened, they comprehend far more easily the existence of a God than that of a material object—of a table, for instance.

The manifestation of the power of the Creator in the works of nature, which are so magnificently displayed around us, is also quickly received into their hearts. Those who have witnessed, as we have done, the astonishment, the joy, the admiration, of our Cretin children at the sight of a glorious sunrise, or sunset, of a summer rainbow, or a beautiful storm amidst our Alpine heights, would feel the truth of the remark made by Diesterweg, that “many a man has felt ashamed of the indifference and insensibility with which he has coldly beheld

the finest phenomena of creation, when he has seen the ecstasy, the attentive consideration, the transports of children."

We have never found it necessary to call the attention of ours to such sights. The works of nature have become to them a sort of teaching of higher things, and led them naturally to the thought of a heavenly Father, whose love is over all, and whose will it is, "that none perish, but that all come to the knowledge of the truth."

Memory is always more or less developed in Cretins.

A boy now with us, of eleven years of age, in spite of the very decided state of Cretinism that he was in when he came, and also of a defect in his speech, learns verses of the Bible, and short sentences very easily, and remembers them most remarkably.

Cretins are also often good mechanics. They can draw, can build card houses with wonderful dexterity, and enjoy other amusements of the same kind.

Their quickness of sensation is extraordinary, their impressions violent; sometimes gay and happy, at others sombre and sad, and there are days in which they are incapable of receiving any good feeling, and seem to have stopped short in every thing.

These difficulties, however, though they recur constantly, are forgotten when their progress is visible, and when they show us by their happiness, their cheerfulness, and their tender affection, that they are grateful for the trouble bestowed upon them for their temporal and spiritual welfare.

In general, Cretins have a great horror of animals, and a predilection for inanimate playthings, dolls, flowers, &c. &c. Their food is also an object of much excitement.

L——, a girl of six months old, was brought to us in a fearful state. Her body was a complete skeleton, out of all proportion, and covered with a cold, wrinkled skin. Her face was white as death; and her shrivelled forehead and cheeks gave her the appearance of an old woman, which was increased by the strange expression of her little, dark, brilliant eyes, full of meaning.

It was July when she came, the season of the year the best fitted, from the elasticity of the air and the splendour of the sunshine, to produce an amelioration in the state of our invalids. Thanks to these kind influences of nature, and to our unwearied care, she made as rapid progress in her recovery as she had done in her decline. In three months' time her deformities began to disappear, her skin

became soft and warm, the wrinkles vanished ; and her countenance, losing its aged look, grew younger every day. The awakening of the mind soon followed the second spring-time of her body, and showed itself by her smiles and manner of noticing every thing around her.

The gradual change that took place in her in a year can only be compared to that of passing from a mummy state into that of an animated being.

After eighteen months spent on the Abendberg, she returned to her native village of Lutzeldorf, where, as we learn from her pastor, Bitrius, she continues perfectly well, and is beginning to talk.

C—— was four years old when she came to us, with every symptom of confirmed rachitic Cretinism. Her nervous system was so completely out of order, that the strongest electric shocks produced scarcely any effect upon her for some months. Aromatic baths, frictions, moderate exercise, meat regimen and milk, were the means of restoring her. Her bones and muscles grew so strong, that in the course of a year she could run and jump. Her mind appeared to advance in proportion to her body, for she learnt to talk in French and also in German. The life and spirits usual in children of

that age at length burst forth, and she was as gay and happy as before she had been cross and disagreeable.

She was peculiarly open-hearted, active, kind, and cleanly. She learnt to read, write, cypher, sew and knit; and, above all, she loved to sing.

It is now two years since she left us, and we had the happiness of hearing lately that she continues quite well and goes to school.

This is an important fact, because in her family there is a strong tendency to Cretinism, and the climate of the Canton of the Valais, where she is, is fatal to all development.

M——— was a year and a half old when confided to us, half paralyzed and in a most deplorable state, unconscious of anything around her. It took at least nine months to reanimate her a little, when she began to show some signs of intelligence. Her's were the extremes of laughter and of tears—of rapture and despair—of attention and inattention. The perfect gloom of night which enveloped the mind of this child at length gave way to a dawn of intelligence, which announced the awakening of all her faculties. At three years old she had very correct notions of right and wrong, of God and of her Saviour; and after a stay of four

years amongst us, this poor child, who seemed doomed only to vegetate all her life, was sent home with every indication of a healthy mind, as well as of a healthy body.

A very different subject was sent to the Hospital. Her rosy cheeks, her bright eyes, her fine intelligent expression, would have deceived any one. Nevertheless, at three years old she could not stand, and cried whenever the attempt was made, and resisted all our efforts to restore animation. We were not, however, to be discouraged, and all at once, as if by magic, she began to articulate a few words, and some months afterwards she could repeat little sentences. In the course of the following year, when in the Valais, we had the satisfaction of seeing this dear child considerably improved in body and mind; showing us, in her infantine way, as much affection as she could, and that she had not in the least forgotten her friends of the Abendberg.

The little Countess of A—— came to us at seven months old, in July 1840, in a dying state. Violent cramps, inflammation and whooping cough, all seemed to conspire to carry her off at once.

My only desire was to render her last moments easy, and, to that end, I gave her the Essence of Hyosciamus in considerable quantities, when, to our astonishment, the worst symptoms disappeared. Her head was of an enormous size; her face pale and deadly; she could neither stand, move, nor articulate, when arrived at the usual age, nor feed herself; and yet she comprehended certain things, and her hearing was acute.

We pursued a strict regimen for a long time with her; the open air, milk diet, meat, aromatic baths, frictions, and iodine taken inwardly.

When we compare her present state with what she was two years ago, her firm manner of walking, her readiness of pronunciation, her healthy look, the proportion that there now is between her body and her head, her merry voice, her cheerful manner, we cannot but feel assured that we have hit upon the proper manner of treating her. Her head has stopped growing, while her body continues to develop itself.

A——, a boy of nine years old, was sent to us with Cretinism plainly written on his forehead. His state was most deplorable. There was a languor over all his person; he was tall of his age, but out of all proportion, and sad to look upon.

His ideas were vague, even on the commonest things; his speech was nothing but a few stammering sounds, assisted by gesticulations. He was mischievous and ill-natured, quarrelsome, jealous, and passionate. But in the midst of it all, one could discover the feeling of right and wrong; for often, after having scratched or beaten his play-fellows, he tried to appease them, or hid himself in a corner out of sight, ashamed of the injustice he had been guilty of.

It was by means of this feeling that we acquired an influence over him. His mind grew along with his body; he left off his bad ways, became sociable and good, and was seized with such a love of learning, that every word and every sentence that he acquired was a subject of transport. The magnificence of our mountain view, the study of prints, seemed to call forth the powers of his soul, and exercised his memory; he was long in comprehending, but what he once acquired he never lost. Stories from the Bible, told with prints, as they are employed by the Deaconesses of Kaiserwerth, excited in this child a most singular enjoyment. The history of the Creation, the Fall, &c. &c., are all deeply engraven on his memory, and he has received into his heart the lessons they convey. His mind has been stored with ideas, whilst his body

was gaining strength. He can run and jump like the others.

Fritz—— came to us at six years of age, with every mark of Cretinism. He remained several months with us without uttering the slightest sound. Shy and timid, he kept apart from every one; he took no notice of anything, and seemed to feel neither joy nor sorrow. Not a spark of intelligence shone in his pale countenance, nor was there anything for the phrenologist to peruse on his skull. He remained in apathetic silence at the lessons of the others, without shewing the least attention, although his five senses appeared to be perfect.

Before the mind could act, it was necessary that the body should acquire strength. One evening, when the setting sun was gilding the mountain tops, and pouring the most vivid tints over the whole heavens, while the other children were standing in rapturous contemplation of its glories, and expressing their infantine wonder and admiration, all on a sudden Fritz also exclaimed—"The Sun! the Sun!" The ice was as it were broken, and he continued from that hour to communicate his ideas to those around him, although his perceptions were still so circumscribed that he could scarcely distinguish his finger from his thumb.

Like the deaf and dumb, he began by making use of verbs and substantives, and, only long after, learned to employ adjectives. His memory was very defective, and his daily instruction required patience equal to that of Job; but, by following the method recommended by the great Pestalozzi, the sterile soil was broken up, and the mind began to shew itself.

After continued efforts, which lasted many months, the perception of exterior objects, and that of intellectual ones, seemed to awaken together.

Mental calculation is not only a powerful means of great development, and also of the study of arithmetic, but it is, at the same time, the most violent effort that the mind can make, and yet it has been constantly observed that Cretins acquire it more readily than any other species of instruction.

Fritz, in common with most of our invalids, has much difficulty in learning to write, on account of the weakness of his hands, but he has a decided taste for music and singing, and in fact he may now be considered as farther advanced in general learning than the greater number of boys of his own age, who are in perfect health.

We will mention another form of Cretinism, which we will distinguish by the name of *dumb*.

The hearing of the dumb Cretins is excellent, but their tongue seems tied by some physical cause. This class of persons have in general very deformed bodies, but are lively, with quick eyes and great powers of attention, and are clever in expressing themselves by pantomimic gestures.

They abound in the valleys on the shores of the Rhine, where there are sometimes as many as thirty of them in a population of fifty inhabitants.

One of these unfortunate beings, L—— B——, nine years old, was sent us from Payerne, his native town, which contains many Cretins, deaf and dumb persons, and others affected with infirmities of the same kind. As to intellect, he was like a child of eighteen months old. Tall, strong, and well made, he had no more ideas in his head when he came to us than children of that age have.

I imagine that this sort of dumbness proceeds in part from want of energy of mind, for though we succeeded with much difficulty in making him speak, by a system of sounds, yet for a long time he only made noises like those of a child of two years old, and even now he prefers employing the childish pantomime to the use of speech, and has to be constantly reminded of it.

He does, however, progress a little, can join

some words together, and, we trust, will in time become a clever workman.

Let not our readers be astonished at the progress of these Cretins, when once the disease has been mastered or arrested. Many men whose names now shine in the pages of science, were once as buried in matter as the children whose progress we have recorded, and were snatched from that fearful state by the tender care of those who surrounded them.

The learned Grüner was considered as an idiot till the age of fourteen, and the poet Zschokke says, in speaking of himself, that, at the school of Magdeburg, he was looked upon as incapable of receiving any instruction, when, all on a sudden, at the age of thirteen, his mind opened of itself.

The celebrated painter of cats, Mind, was likewise a Cretin in his infancy, though now remarkable for most extraordinary gifts.

The opinion published by the Medical Committee of Bâle, is in complete harmony with these facts:—
“ We consider Cretinism as the result of an interruption of the development of the brain, which has either taken place before the birth, or in earliest in-

fancy. The sooner it takes place the more complete is the deformity of the body."

The causes whence proceed the malady which we have undertaken to combat, are, even now, after so many researches, but imperfectly known.

Hereditary defects are to be observed on one hand, and the peculiarities of certain localities on the other. Stagnation of the air in confined valleys, places, even on the mountains, whose vegetation is excessive, where the rain or melted snow remains without an outlet, appears always to characterize the cradle of infant Cretins.

It has been observed on a farm belonging to Joseph Willegger, in Syrintz, Klagenfurth, that the farm-servants, who came there in good health, began, in a very short time, to have goîtres, and to experience bodily and mental weakness, till, in the course of years, they became Cretins. Those born on the farm were sooner affected by the air than were strangers; and, of the four brothers, the former proprietors, two were completely Cretins, the others half so, and yet they attained the astonishing age of one hundred and one hundred and five years.

Animals also were affected, especially those reared on the farm, and wasted away without any apparent cause.

At Münt, on the mountain near Naters, in the Valais, the same phenomena are observable. In a population of a hundred souls thirty are Cretins. The vegetation is magnificent there, but the water from the higher Alps is held on the granite rocks, and occasions unwholesome vapours. Never will the spectacle that there presented itself, of those unfortunate beings, be effaced from my memory.

Exactly the same facts have been observed at Albeckschen, whose present proprietor, a Swiss officer, came to inhabit it with his first wife, who had a goître soon after, and died half a Cretin.

He himself, and his second wife, are now reduced to the same sad state, and five of the elder children are completely so.

That branch of the family of Planta, which inhabited the Chateau of Rechberg, (which, however, must not be confounded with the branch of the noble Plantas of Reichnau,) is now almost entirely extinct, with the exception of two Cretins in the hospital of Coïre. And many are the examples, in our Switzerland, of whole families, once celebrated in its history, which have become the prey of this scourge.

In Austria, Cretinism is become so prevalent on the banks of the Danube, that at the season of the year when the new recruits are called out to exer-

cise, not one man of the age required was to be found capable of bearing arms in all the circle of P. A. Grossspechlaan, and in the villages round Puchlarn and Brun, not one family is exempt from it; some even are entirely composed of Cretins and half Cretins.

Dr. Schausberger writes that parents, who come to Puchlarn in perfect health, give birth to children who are complete Cretins; while, on the contrary, half Cretins, who left Puchlarn to settle on the mountains, brought forth children who were perfectly intelligent. *

The attention of other governments besides those of the Swiss Confederation, has been directed to the Abendberg, but only that of German ones.

Wurtemberg sent a physician to examine into the system pursued there, and the King himself has honoured the establishment with a visit.

Saxony also deputed a scientific person to make himself master of our method of treating the children.

But in the history of our Hospice, the donation of the noble Countess Ida of Hahn Hahn stands

* Remarks and Considerations on Cretinism on the two banks of the Danube.—*Weekly Publications*, No. 44. 1842.

pre-eminent, for she first, with a woman's tenderness, put forth her hand to stay, if possible, the plague which has wasted and is still decimating the strength of the inhabitants of the Valais; this lady gave the magnificent present of a capital of seven thousand five hundred French francs, the interest of which is to be employed in favour of the Cretin children of the Valais.

Our kind friend Dr. Trayer of Clonmel, in Ireland, and Dr. Twining of London, have also proved by words and deeds the interest they take in the advancement of science, the welfare of the human race, and the snatching not only of bodies, but of souls, from destruction. They are our friends as well as our benefactors.

Oh! may the feeling that we are all the children of one man, the flock of one fold, of which the Lord is the shepherd, and that we ought to love each other, whether Jew or Gentile, be more and more diffused in our hearts, and produce those ever lovely fruits which will live when all traces of national, and even of human glory, shall have ceased to be!

TESTIMONY IN FAVOUR OF THE ABENDBERG.

*Letter from Ida, Countess of Hahn Hahn, to Dr.
Guggenbühl, May 1845.*

Ever since my stay on the Abendberg, my dear Doctor, I have been taken up with the thoughts of being useful to your Establishment.

My bookseller having to pay me a small sum in June, you will receive through him 7500 French francs as a capital, of which the interest will be employed in favour of some poor Valaisan child. As soon as the first shall have left the Abendberg, I request that another may take its place, and so on ; and that this child may always be called the Countess of Hahn Hahn's child, for there is nothing with which I should more wish my name to be associated than this labour of the purest love that the age has brought forth.

I beseech our Lord to bless this undertaking. Its success is in *His* hand, and it is one of His secrets. Man can only give his help, his good wishes, his charity ; they are all that he possesses that is good.

I cannot tell you how often I have thought of

you. The age in which we live is an active one, and everybody is desirous of doing something : the really good of effecting what is praiseworthy. My eyes naturally turn to you as to one who knows perhaps best *how* to do good ; perhaps also I feel more sympathy towards you, because I comprehend you better than others do. Indeed, I wish for nothing more than to win all hearts in favour of the Abendberg, to direct public attention towards it, and bid them estimate as it deserves this labour of love, which, constrained by compassion for the ills of mankind, you have undertaken alone and unassisted. The very thought of it edifies me, and I assure you that to meet with such persons, to be allowed to give them the right hand of fellowship, is the greatest of all possible enjoyments to such as myself, who can *feel*, but cannot *act*.

You, Sir, know how to *act*, and yours is a noble destiny, for you are still young, and but beginning the labour of the day. Stay, then, on your lovely Abendberg, amidst the wretched and the forlorn, to whose amelioration you have devoted your life, or descend only from its heights to do good to your fellow-men, and you will have strength and joy, according to my sincerest wishes.

Words and money are easy to give for the good of others, but you have given them your life, and

even your affections. It is thus only that great actions are performed.

The troubles that have arisen in Switzerland afflict and alarm me. The beautiful borders of the Lake of Lucerne, which formerly beheld the high deeds of her children, what sad misdeeds do they now witness? You hope for better days, you say, but indeed I doubt it, for in our time theories have usurped the place of action.

Even were I never to return to Switzerland, it would be impossible for me to forget the children of the Abendberg, or to lose sight of them and their protector.

I remain,

DEAR SIR,

Yours,

IDA, Countess of HAHN HAHN.

*Extracts from a Letter from Dr. Valentin, Professor at
Berne, to Dr. Guggenbühl.*

Accept, once more, my beloved friend and colleague, my most affectionate thanks for your kind reception during my visit to the Abendberg. I left it with the full persuasion that your generous efforts

will not only meet with immediate success, but also set the example for similar establishments in other countries. Our ancestors at length paid a debt long due to suffering humanity, in the person of the blind, and of the deaf and dumb ; and on *us* devolves the more difficult task of raising the Cretin to his place in society, and to *you*, my dear friend, is given this noble privilege.

The blind are so dependent upon others, that they are sure to inspire a feeling of compassion in those who surround them ; and the deaf and dumb, whose feelings are confined to their own bosoms, possess an energy of character which commands esteem. But the Cretin—he has nothing to interest any one. His dulness and apathy, his stupid look, his imperfect speech, are all repulsive.

It is not the poor alone that claim your especial care : often the rich are equally exposed to this heavy calamity from various external circumstances. Riches and civilisation are equally incapable of warding off this malady, or of effecting its cure.

If, in your establishment, you cannot *always* eradicate the disorder or its effects, you can at least render a large proportion of those who have been under your care useful members of society, capable of gaining their livelihood, and therefore no longer a burden to their families.

That you are destined, especially, to assist that class of children whose progress has been stopped short at once by Cretinism, is proved to me by the little Valaisan whom I saw at the Abendberg. Had he remained at Sion, in his family, he would never have learnt the smallest thing, and would certainly have fallen into a state of torpidity of mind as great as that of his body.

Allow me to reiterate on paper a proposition which I already made to you on the Abendberg, which is, to compose a simple and popular essay on Cretinism, adapted to the comprehension of the lower orders; not describing what it is—for every one knows it but too well—but rather pointing out the first symptoms of it in infants, and calling on the parents to fly to their assistance as they would to an alarm of fire, on the very first appearance of any one of them; giving them, at the same time, clear and precise rules for the treatment of each individual species, especially showing what may occasion it in their dwellings, in their food, and in their manner of living.

Believe me,

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Yours very affectionately,

G. VALENTIN.

Letter from Dr. Jean Trümpf, President of the Criminal Tribunal at Glaris, to Dr. Guggenbühl.

MY HONOURED COLLEAGUE,

Yours is a work of general utility of quite a new species, and although difficult in itself, yet infinitely less so than the transplantation of whole villages from their unwholesome valleys to healthier sites on the mountains, which would be the best of all remedies. If it is almost impossible to found new colonies on the heights, from the want of proper situations, so it would be also next to impossible to persuade whole families attacked by Cretinism to leave the hearths of their forefathers.

The first founders of the colony of Linth proposed the transporting of poor families from the valleys, but the political and ecclesiastical laws were opposed to it. I know not if they are equally despotic in other cantons, but perhaps it might be well to propose such a scheme to the Helvetic Society of Public Utility, as its connexions and correspondence with the different governments and their clergy might make it easy of accomplishment.

It is, indeed, a most important subject, and yours is a noble undertaking, which well deserves the most serious consideration, and I have already submit-

ted it to the examination of our Medical Society here.

You are doubtless aware, that Cretinism is on the decline in *our* Canton, but in some others, in Argovie for instance, it is quite the reverse. We have also many fewer entire Cretins, so that hopes may be entertained that, in the course of time, it may quite disappear in Switzerland, in the same manner as leprosy, plague, &c., have done.

Your gigantic project, my dear colleague, for eradicating this terrible scourge, will never be realized but in the course of years. Ere the arid moral wastes become a fertile soil, and future generations rear and cherish the plant that you are now depositing the seed of in the earth, a very long time must elapse.

You need the help of all your colleagues in endeavouring to discern the causes of the disease, for one person alone could never suffice, nor one year, nor even ten years, bring us to a perfect conclusion.

And, after all that we can do, the success of it depends on the will of God alone.

Accept the assurance of the friendship and respect of your colleague,

JEAN TRÜMPÄY.

*Letter from Professor Schönlein, Privy Councillor at
Berlin, to Dr. Guggenbühl.*

SIR,

I was happy to learn by the letter you did me the honour to address to me, that an undertaking so long called for in the name of science, and so imperiously demanded by the voice of humanity, is at length about to be realized. It has my liveliest sympathy, and will open a new world to a multitude of unfortunate beings.

Allow me to express the wish, that the result of your experience, the fruits of your labours, with regard to the hitherto hidden causes of this disorder, may, ere long, become known to the scientific world.

I remain,

SIR,

Your's truly,

SCHÖNLEIN.

*Letter from Professor Troxler of Berne, to Dr.
Guggenbühl. August 1845.*

DEAR SIR, AND HONOURED COLLEAGUE,

I am happy in being able to do something, however small, for the Hospital of the Abendberg. Whilst at Geneva for the meeting of the Swiss

Naturalists this year, a Select Committee was appointed, at my request, to inquire into the treatment of endemic and sporadic Cretinism. It is composed of Messrs. Schintz, Mayor, Honkard, Demme, Libert, and myself.

We have been requested, in the first place, publicly to communicate to you the grateful feelings of the Society towards you, for your important and philanthropic labours.

And, secondly, we are desired to continue our statistic and topographic researches, more especially as to the effects of climate and atmosphere, which were begun in 1830 at St. Gall.

This we shall do, and we are persuaded that the difficulties which must necessarily arise will not hinder you from continuing the work which you have begun with so much zeal and self-devotion.

We are also fully convinced that you will attain the desired end, and that the satisfactory results which I had the happiness to lay before the Society must meet with the sympathy and the co-operation of the worthy of all countries.

Your hospital, as yet the only one in existence, will become a practical proof of the truth or the falsehood of all the various opinions which have been put forth, as it is already a source of blessing for those who are afar, as well as those that are

near, and a pattern for similar establishments in other countries.

May God continue to give you strength, courage, and fervent charity, and incline those to help you who, by their natural gifts or situation in life, *can* come forward in aid of one of the noblest philanthropic works which man has yet conceived in the age we live in.

I remain, with feelings of sincere esteem,
Your affectionate

TROXLER,
Professor of Philosophy.

Letter from M. Germond, then Pastor at Echallens, in the Canton de Vaud, and founder of the first establishment of Deaconesses in Switzerland, to Madame Gaussen, at Geneva.

ECHALLENS, July 17, 1845.

MADAM, AND DEAR SISTER IN CHRIST,

You ask me to give you frankly the impression which my visit to the Abendberg has made upon me. It has been infinitely more favourable than I expected; I had heard reports of some of the persons employed there which were not satisfactory, and my journey was undertaken especially to judge myself whether my two Deaconesses, whom I had

placed there at Dr. Guggenbühl's request, ought to remain.

The result has been, that some changes are to be made amongst the superintendants, &c., but I saw there so much that was so exceedingly interesting, that, in my opinion, it would be *a sin not to assist them*.

I was present at several lessons given clearly and systematically. Many of the children read, write, and sum as well as any boys and girls taken at a venture, and of the same age, in our parish schools of the Canton de Vaud.

The worst features of Cretinism were visible only in a small number of the inmates of the Abendberg when I visited it, five or six at most, and there are at least twenty-two or twenty-three pupils. Many of them are scrofulous, in whom a medical eye can distinguish the features of Cretinism, but who, to my inexperienced one, appeared little different from other children. They are almost all happy, merry, and affectionate. Some of them exhibit a disposition to torpor, which is peculiar to Cretins, and cry much when forced to walk.

Success has certainly been obtained, and I myself was witness to the transports of joy of some poor parents on finding the great change which had been wrought on their children, during the five or six months that they had not seen them.

These children could speak and read tolerably, whereas before they could hardly pronounce a few words intelligibly. The delighted parents were never tired of contemplating such astonishing progress. It was indeed a most touching spectacle, but I hope that still greater things will be done.

You ask how you can aid this interesting Institution. Money is always, I believe, the most useful manner of helping, but books also, such as Draper's Bible Histories with prints, and little Hymn Books used in infant schools, or collections of prints, would give great pleasure, and be very useful.

I hope, Madam, that I have replied to your questions according to your wishes,

And remain, &c.,

LOUIS GERMOND, Pastor.

* * MESSRS. TWINING, *Bankers, 215, Strand, London,*
* *have kindly intimated their willingness to take charge of*
any Donations intended for the Hospital of the Abendberg.

POSTSCRIPT.

A VALUABLE contribution to the statistics of Idiocy has reached the editor just as the preceding sheets were passing through the press. It is contained in the Report for 1848 of the medical officers of the Lunatic Asylum for the county of Lancaster. The reporter, Mr. Samuel Gaskell, states that, under a deep sense of the importance of increased attention being bestowed upon congenital idiots and imbeciles, he “has made every effort to collect in the county, with which his asylum is connected, as many facts as possible, bearing upon the subject, so as to give a just idea of the extent of the evil, as well as of the necessity for a speedy remedy.” It results from Mr. Gaskell’s inquiries, (made chiefly through the poor-law medical officers,) that of 688 paupers in the county of Lancaster, returned as lunatics, 185 had been attacked with insanity, and 503 had been deficient from birth, none of whom had been

in any asylum. There can be no doubt, however, that in this number of 503 idiots and imbeciles, many children, who must be classed in the same category, are not included; and Mr. Gaskell concludes "that idiocy prevails to a much larger extent than would at first sight be imagined." He refers to the results of a thorough inquiry into the condition of idiots lately made by the public authorities of the state of Massachusetts, whence it appears, that out of 543 idiots visited by the Commission, only 106 are supported at the public expense.

"Entertaining no doubt of the advantages to be derived from judicious and systematic training, when applied early in life, and conducted by competent persons in institutions, or departments of institutions, specially adapted to the purpose of educating idiots," Mr. Gaskell holds, "that it is incumbent on those who are in any way responsible for these helpless beings, to endeavour to devise and establish the necessary means of rescuing them from a life of degradation, by training them up in orderly habits, and applying their small share of faculty to appropriate occupation."

Amongst the interesting facts brought out by Dr. Gaskell's inquiries, may be mentioned the following: that in one of the secluded dales, formed by the range of hills separating Lancashire from Yorkshire,

the number of idiots is so great as to reach the proportion of one in a hundred of the inhabitants ; that in another place, the proportion is one in two hundred ; and, lastly, that in one of the colline districts, two children exist, in whom *Cretinism* is distinctly marked.

The intelligent zeal and philanthropy of Mr. Gaskell have led him to the most praiseworthy exertions, with a view to rouse public attention to this subject. He has well attempted in one county what may be, and ought to be, done, by a national effort, and at the national expense, for the whole kingdom ; and, surely, such a psychological survey as this implies is not a less worthy object on which to expend part of the public funds, than are other surveys, trigonometrical, geological, and hydrographical, which have drawn forth so much of the science, and have been so liberally supported by the wealth of the nation.

